

Sleep is Not the Remedy by daughterofeve16

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Friendship, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Characters: Steve H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-01-05 09:43:20

Updated: 2018-01-05 09:43:20

Packaged: 2019-12-17 03:30:18

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,412

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: In which the Party invites Steve to a sleepover, and during the night he gets more than he bargains for. One-shot, post Season 2.

Sleep is Not the Remedy

A/N: Thanks for checking out this fic! All credit goes to Netflix and The Duffer Brothers. I'm so glad they brought these characters to life!

"Alright, shitheads. Listen up. It's time for bed." Steve waited a second for the backlash to begin. His expectations were met.

"Aww seriously, Steve?" Dustin.

"Yeah, Steve. We have to finish the game!" Mike.

"It'll only take like, ten more minutes." Lucas.

"Actually guys, I'm kinda tired." Will. And now the onslaught would be directed to the smallest member of the Party.

"You've got to be kidding me, Will!" Mike.

"It's not *that* late." Lucas. Steve decided to intervene before Dustin put his two cents in.

"Guys! I'm in charge here, remember? What I say goes. It's 2 AM and it's time for bed," Steve repeated. The younger boys started groaning, ready to protest.

"Move 'em up and move 'em out. Come on guys. Upstairs," Steve prodded. The Party was having a sleepover at the Wheeler's house, and the boys insisted Steve come over and stay with them. Nancy was out with Jonathan, doing whatever it was they did—Steve tried not to think too much about that—and Karen was having a ladies' night, so it was understood that she wouldn't be back home until the next morning. And Steve had been to the Wheeler residence enough times to know that Ted was useless when it came to anything besides eating and watching TV, so he figured it wouldn't hurt to keep an eye on the kids. He watched as three of the four begrudgingly trudged up the stairs. Will turned back to Steve and gave him a grateful smile. Steve nodded in response. God, but if that kid wasn't growing on him. He cleaned up a couple candy bar wrappers and followed the kids up,

shutting off the basement light. When he reached ground level, Steve was met with Mike throwing a pillow and blanket into his face.

"Jeeze, kid. A little warning would be nice," Steve stated, catching the items.

"You're good with sleeping on the couch?" Mike wondered. "If not, we could squeeze three into one of my bunk beds..." At that, Dustin made his ridiculous "purring" noise and Steve was officially ready to tell the day goodbye.

"I think seven hours of sitting at that cramped table playing Dungeons and Dragons got me closer to you all than I ever wanted to be. Remind me to introduce you losers to Ralph Lauren," Steve responded.

"Ralph who?" Dustin asked.

"Never mind, go to bed," Steve said. By this time the five had made it to the living room and Steve threw the pillow and blanket onto the couch.

"Goodnight, Steve," Will declared. This was followed by three similar statements, and then the boys all stood staring at the teenager. Steve raised an eyebrow.

"What? Are you all waiting for a kiss goodnight? Because that's not happening," Steve explained.

"Eww, gross. No, we just wanted to know if you could make us pancakes in the morning. Mr. Wheeler's pancakes are... ummm..." Lucas struggled to find the words. Steve had to chuckle at that.

"I think I can handle that. Night, shitheads." A resounding "Night, Steve" followed as the boys clambered up the stairs. Steve sat down on the couch, wondering when he became resident babysitter and chef. He shook his head, a half-smile tugging on his lips. Steve slipped out of his jacket and draped it over the back of the couch, leaving him in his untucked t-shirt and jeans. Not the most comfortable thing to sleep in, but he couldn't complain. The Wheeler couch with the kiddos upstairs was a hell of a lot more comfortable

than a plush bed in an empty house.

Steve sunk into the cushions, adjusting the pillow so his head rested against the arm of the couch. He pulled the blanket up to his shoulders and sighed. From this angle he could see the front door perfectly. He knew at some point during the night Nancy would walk in, or at least he hoped she wasn't staying over with Jonathan. He really *shouldn't* care; it had been months since their break-up, or whatever the hell they wanted to label it. Jonathan and Nancy had been an established couple for a while. He was even friends with them. This shouldn't bother him.

But he still wondered what Nancy would think when she walked in and saw him sleeping there on the couch. With that on his mind, Steve rolled onto his side and buried his face in the pillow, hoping that sleep would find him quickly and put him out of his misery.

Steve was in the Byers' house. How he came to be there, though, he wasn't quite sure. Taking in his surroundings, he saw Jonathan wielding a kitchen knife and Nancy holding a gun. He would be more turned on if she wasn't holding Jonathan's hand. Looking down, he realized that he was gripping his nail bat.

What the hell? Steve thought. Christmas lights were strung haphazardly from the ceiling and the Byers' living room had certainly seen better days. The wallpaper was ripping off, there were holes in the wall, and pieces of the ceiling were scattered on the floor. Steve had just been at the Byers' residence the day before to pick up Will and he did not remember the home looking like this. What was going on?

"Steve! Are you in or out?" Nancy's voice released him from his thoughts.

"What?"

"The demogorgan, you idiot! We've got to take it out." Steve felt his heart accelerate. It was back? How? Hadn't Eleven closed the gate? He thought all this crazy shit was supposed to be over after the Night of the Demodogs, as Dustin referenced it.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"We don't know, but it's coming," Jonathan explained. Steve tightened his grip on the bat and moved forward to stand next to Nancy. He resisted the urge to pull her close, recognizing that this was Jonathan's job now. As if on cue, Jonathan wrapped an arm around Nancy's waist.

"So what's the plan?" Steve asked.

"Lure it into the hallway. We've got a bear trap set up, and then we're going to light it on fire," Nancy stated. All of this seemed too familiar to Steve. He remembered from the last time that this plan may have succeeded in getting the demogorgan away from them, but it didn't eliminate the threat altogether.

"Wait, shouldn't we—" Steve was interrupted, though, by the sudden blinking of all the lights in the Byers' home.

"Get ready," Jonathan warned. Steve brought the bat up to his shoulder, taking a batter's stance. He watched as Nancy raised the handgun and Jonathan held out the knife. From experience, he wasn't sure either of those weapons would do much good, but it appeared that those were all they had.

"Where is it?" Nancy's voice was strong and confident, but Steve could detect the slight tremble.

"I don't know. I don't know!" Jonathan's voice was not as composed as Nancy's. At this point the three teenagers stood back to back and slowly circled around the living room. Steve made sure his shoulder was brushing Nancy's; since he wasn't facing her, he had to feel that she was still close. The lights kept flashing until suddenly everything went dark.

"Shit," Steve whispered under his breath. The entire house was silent, albeit the teenagers' erratic breathing. They stood against each other, and Steve couldn't help but grab Nancy's arm with his free hand.

"Just... stay calm, guys," Jonathan directed, although he sounded anything but. Steve felt Nancy breathing, her back heaving up and

down against his. He gripped her arm tighter, pulling her into him. Jonathan followed suit, making a Nancy-sandwich of sorts.

"Jonathan, Steve, I'm f—" but Nancy's words were cut off by a resounding crash. Immediately the lights began flashing again and the silhouette of a large, faceless creature became visible.

"It's right here!" Steve shouted. He felt Nancy and Jonathan whip around and almost instantly a gunshot went off. The demogorgan let out a gargled shriek and lunged forward. Steve swung at the monster, feeling the bat connect with thick flesh. He heard Nancy's gun go off again and felt the creature jerk sideways. Steve hit the monster again and some weird goop sprayed out at him from the demogorgan's side.

"Steve, get out of the way!" Jonathan shouted. Steve dove to the left as another gunshot rang through the night. Now the monster was just pissed. Steve watched in horror as it dove for Nancy.

"No!" he screamed in unison with Jonathan. Steve scrambled to his feet just in time to see Jonathan dive in front of Nancy, right in the path of the demogorgan. The creature leapt onto Jonathan, sinking its many rows of teeth into the Byers boy's chest.

"Jonathan!" Nancy shrieked. She reached for him, but Steve grabbed her around the waist and pulled her back. She fought against him, but Steve continued to pull her backwards.

"Nancy, Nancy! Stop! We have to get out of here!" She was shaking.

"But, Jonathan!"

"I know, Nance. I know." Steve felt his voice catch, but then the demogorgan turned its attention from Jonathan and back to them.

"Nancy, shoot!" Steve yelled. Nancy pulled herself together enough to aim the gun and pull the trigger. And she kept going. Bullet after bullet after bullet. The monster lurched but advanced.

"Come on!" Steve clutched Nancy's arm and started running towards Will's room. Together they jumped over the bear trap and Steve grasped the knob on Will's door. He pushed it. Nothing happened. He tried again, frantic.

"Shit. No no no no no no!" he yelled.

"Steve..." Nancy's voice was panicked.

"It's locked!" He whipped around and tried the door to Jonathan's room. It didn't budge. He swung the bat, breaking off the doorknob.

"Steve!" Nancy exclaimed. Steve turned and saw that the demogorgan was only a couple feet away. He kicked open the door.

"Nancy, get in!" Steve urged.

"It... it killed Jonathan! I have to kill it!" Nancy faced the monster, gun leveled. She pulled the trigger. The bullet had no effect.

"Nancy, stop!" Steve reached for her a second too late. She was ripped out of his grasp by the demogorgan.

"No!" Steve cried. Nancy's scream mingled with the screech of the predator as it bared down on Nancy's stomach. Steve could hear Nancy's blood sloshing down the monster's throat and he knew he was going to be sick. Tears stung his eyes as he lifted the bat above his head and slammed it into the demogorgan with all his might.

"Get the hell away from her!" he yelled. The creature turned its attention to him and displayed its many rows of teeth, Nancy's blood dripping and staining them a deep crimson. It emitted a loud shriek as it advanced on him. The creature's putrid breath invaded Steve's senses and the heat emitting from its body made Steve tremble. It reached out a clawed hand towards Steve's chest... and abruptly vanished. Steve stood for a second in shock, regained his bearings, then scrambled to Nancy's side.

"Nancy? Nancy, no." He gently took her hand and pressed it to his cheek. Blood spilled from her abdomen and soaked her sweater. Her eyes fluttered.

"St-Steve?" Her voice was barely a whisper.

"Yes, Nance?" He pushed her hair back from her forehead.

"I'm sor—" She didn't finish her sentence. She went limp under his

touch.

"No," Steve whispered. "This can't... this... no. No!" Steve draped himself over Nancy's body, sobs wracking his system. After a moment Steve felt himself drop to the ground as Nancy's body disappeared below him.

"Nancy? What?" He sat up, craning his neck around the hallway to find her. Much to his surprise, he was met by a very pissed-off Jonathan standing at the end of the hall. He was still soaked in blood, but he looked very much alive.

"Jonathan, you're alive!" Steve rushed up to meet him, not expecting the younger man to grab him by the throat and slam him into the wall.

"You let Nancy die," Jonathan seethed.

"What? No..." Steve choked out.

"Goodbye, Steve." Jonathan tightened his grip on Steve's windpipe, and Steve lost his will to put up a fight.

Steve couldn't breathe. Nancy was dead, and he couldn't breathe. There wasn't enough air in his lungs. His chest felt tight, his heart raced. He was burning up. Steve thought he heard someone call his name, but the sound of his heart booming in his chest drowned everything else out. He could still feel Jonathan's hand constricting his throat. He needed air. He needed it *now*. Suddenly, a firm hand gripped his shoulder and shook him, hard.

"Steve! Wake up!" came a familiar voice. Wake up? What? The hand jostled him again. "You're asleep! Wake up!" His eyes popped open and he was face to face with... Nancy? No, that couldn't be right.

"No, you're dead. You died!" he exclaimed. His breathing became erratic as he panicked. It felt like he was breathing through a very tiny straw.

"Steve! I'm right here! I'm alive. You were dreaming," Nancy explained. Steve just stared at her, uncomprehending. She seemed real, but he had just seen her die. And it was his fault.

"No... no..." Steve murmured. The woman in front of him—Nancy?—gripped both of his shoulders and hauled him into a sitting position.

"Look at me, Steve. My eyes. Right here." She gently guided his chin with her hand until he was facing her. She sat beside him, taking his hands in hers. "Steve, you're at my house, sleeping on my couch. Whatever happened, you were dreaming. But I need you to breathe, okay? You're hyperventilating," Nancy explained. Steve still wasn't quite sure what was going on. All he knew was he couldn't get any damn air.

"Breathe with me, Steve. In, out. In, out." She pulled his hand up to her chest and pressed it against her heart. He could feel it beating. Perhaps he had been dreaming after all.

"Steve, breathe in. Like this," He felt Nancy's chest expand. He tried to mimic her. "Now out. In, now out. There you go." He sat there for who knows how long following Nancy's lead. Eventually she slid her hand against his chest and rested it over his heart. Her hand was cold, but he didn't flinch away. She seemed satisfied at whatever she found there. "That's better, Steve. Just calm down. Everything is alright. It was a dream," she coaxed. After a moment he fully realized where his hand was and where hers was and he quickly pulled away, embarrassed. He ran a hand through his sweaty hair.

"Nancy, I'm sorry, I—" She cut him off.

"It's okay, Steve. I think we've all had our fair share of nightmares over the past year," she assured. He simply nodded.

"Are you okay?" she wondered. He exhaled slowly, weighing his response. *Am I okay? I just witnessed your brutal death, believed it was real, and had a panic attack in front of you.*

"Just... just peachy," he decided on. Nancy frowned.

"You look a little pale. Let me get you some water." She disappeared into the kitchen. Steve leaned his arms on his knees and rested his head in his hands. This was not how he was expecting to spend this night. Sure, he'd had nightmares before, but none rivaled this. This one was way too real. He felt Nancy sit by him and place a hand on

his back, rubbing small circles into his shirt. She offered him the water, and he gulped it down in a few sips.

"Do you want to talk about it?" she asked. He shook his head. He didn't want to relive any of that. Plus, he didn't want to paint Jonathan in a... different... light. He straightened out and relaxed back into the couch cushions, sighing. He was a sweaty mess and his chest still didn't feel quite right, but he felt a hell of a lot better than he did a few minutes ago.

"Well, I'm here, if you need me."

"I know, Nance. Thanks." Steve paused for a moment, wanting to ask Nancy something but not knowing how to phrase it. "How... how did you find me? Was I screaming or something?" Steve rubbed his neck, trying to keep his embarrassment from showing.

"No, it was nothing like that. I just got home from Jonathan's—" She paused for a beat, like she was sorry for bringing that up. "And I saw you on the couch. You were tossing and turning, and you sounded like you were having trouble breathing. I was scared you were hurt or something, but then I realized you were dreaming," she explained. "So I woke you up." Steve closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. This really wasn't his night.

"I'm sorry, Nance." Steve didn't know what else to say. Nancy nudged him in the ribs.

"Seriously, Steve, stop apologizing. Those nightmares... we've all been there." Steve closed his eyes and nodded. Nancy shifted beside him. "So... uh, can I get you one of Dad's t-shirts? Yours is a bit... sweaty," Nancy observed. Steve looked down and noticed his shirt was soaked. Damn, this nightmare really did a number on him.

"That's okay, Nancy. I'll just... take it off." Steve was ninety-nine percent sure this was the most awkward situation he had ever found himself in, and that included the time his lip got caught on Susan Benson's braces while they were kissing. Steve paused. He glanced at Nancy. She seemed unperturbed, albeit the twiddling of her thumbs. She caught his glance.

"Steve, you can take off your shirt. It's nothing I haven't seen before," she stated matter-of-factly. The heat rushed to Steve's cheeks. He quickly pulled the shirt over his head and tossed it over the arm of the couch. He had to admit, it did feel better.

"Can I get you anything else?" Nancy wondered.

"I'm good, Nancy."

"Do you think you'll be able to sleep?"

"Yeah," Steve breathed, though he wasn't sure he believed it. He could still feel Jonathan's hand crushing his throat and see Nancy's blood flowing from her stomach. He shuddered. Nancy's hand found its way to Steve's shoulder.

"If you need me, you know where to find me," she offered. "And you won't have to ninja your way up there this time." Steve gave a small laugh at the memory. That seemed so long ago, before all this complicated stuff dictated their lives. He breathed deeply as Nancy stood up. She started to walk up the stairs.

"Hey, Nance?" She turned around, her hair falling over one of her shoulders.

"Yeah?"

"Thanks." A lopsided smile tugged at Steve's lips. Nancy just grinned and disappeared up the staircase. Steve plopped back onto the couch and pulled the blanket up to his shoulders. Nancy was alive. As far as he was aware, Jonathan was alive. Those four little shits were snoozing away upstairs. Everything was okay. He snuggled deeper into the couch and waited for sleep to reclaim him. Besides, he had to rest up; cooking those pancakes to perfection in the morning was sure to be a taxing job. With that thought Steve fell asleep, and the nightmares did not revisit.

A/N: I hope you enjoyed the story! I tried to capture the essence of each character, but I'm still learning; Steve is so complicated, but I love it! Any feedback would be appreciated. :) Thanks!